

CLAIMS

1. A method for controlling a production line for the manufacture and/or packaging of contact lenses which production line simultaneous by processes at least two lots, the method comprising dividing at least a portion of the production line into a series of cells through which the contact lens pass sequentially, and providing a control system comprising at least three shifts registers each containing information about each of said cells, including:
 - 10 (a) a location shift register which indicates whether a cell should be empty or occupied,
 - (b) a lot data shift register which is a non-binary shift register and contains manufacturing and/or prescription data about the contact lens which should be in the cell and
 - (c) a condition shift register which provides an indication of the condition of the product in the cell,
 - 20 and simultaneously indexing all of said shift registers as a lens passes down the production line from one cell to the next cell.
2. A method as claimed in Claim 1 which comprises detecting the presence or absence of product in a cell and comparing the result with the information for that cell in the location shift register.
3. A process as claimed in Claim 2 in which a plurality of adjacent empty cells is inserted at the start and end of a manufacturing lot.
- 30 4. A method as claimed in Claim 3 in which detection of said plurality of empty cells is used to trigger a processing event.

5. A process as claimed in Claim 4 in which the processing event is selected from resetting a processing station, wiping data from a processing station and instigating a reporting action.
- 5 6. A process as claimed in any preceding claim in which a gap comprising a predetermined number of empty cells is inserted between successive manufacturing lots on the production line and the control system comprises a gap defence mechanism including detectors and counters to monitor said gap as it proceeds down the production line.
- 10 7. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which information from the lot data shift register is used to control the activity of a cell.
- 15 8. A process as claimed in any preceding claim which comprises the step of inspecting the product in a cell and/or monitoring the production activity in a cell and comparing the resulting data with data in the lot data shift register.
- 20 9. A method as claimed in any preceding claim in which information in the condition shift register is used to trigger ejection of a product from the production line.
10. A method as claimed in Claim 9 in which ejection of product from the production line causes the location shift register to change to signify the cell is empty of product.